

Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00
FEA-01 ACDA-07 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 NSF-01
DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 CG-00 DOTE-00
CEQ-01 EB-08 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIEP-01 FPC-01
H-01 INT-05 L-03 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 SS-15 STR-04
TRSE-00 /149 W

-----180539 086705 /12

R 180029Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9831
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 1131

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TGEN, XV, AS
SUBJECT: ANTARCTICA: SENATOR WEBSTER'S ACCOUNT OF ANTARCTIC OIL
EXPLORATION

REF: (A) CANBERRA 777, (B) WELLINGTON 381, (C) CANBERRA 683
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1. THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE ON "OIL EXPLORATION IN ANTARCTICA":
TOOK PLACE IN THE SENATE ON FEBRUARY 16 BETWEEN SENATOR
DOUGLAS MCCLELLAND (LABOR, NSW, REPRESENTING THE SHADOW MIN-
ISTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE SENATE) AND SENATOR WEBSTER
(MINISTER FOR SCIENCE) "SENATOR DOUGLAS MCCLELLAND MY QUES-
TION IS DIRECTED TO THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND CONCERNS

HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, FOLLOWING HIS VISIT LAST MONTH TO ANTARCTICA, THAT AN INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM WAS PLANNING TO SPEND DOLS 100 M IN DRILLING FOR OIL OFF ANTARCTICA. I ASK WHETHER THIS CONSORTIUM IS PROPOSING TO CARRY OUT THE DRILLING IN WATERS ADJACENT TO THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC TERRITORY, FOR WHICH TERRITORY THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE IS MINISTERIALLY RESPONSIBLE TO THIS PARLIAMENT. "SENATOR WEBSTER -- AS THE HONOURABLE SENATOR HAS INDICATED, I VISITED THE ANTARCTIC IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR. ON MY RETURN I MADE SOME COMMENTS DURING A PRESS INTERVIEW IN WHICH THE MAIN INTEREST OF THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED WAS THE RESOURCES OF THE ANTARCTIC. IN ANSWER TO THE PARTICULAR QUESTION RAISED BY THE HONOURABLE SENATOR, I POINT OUT THAT AT THAT TIME I MADE THIS COMMENT:

'GENERALLY, EXPLOITATION IS NOT OCCURRING FOR MINERALS. THAT WOULD BE THE OFFICIAL SITUATION. I'M TOLD, WHILST I'M THERE, THAT THERE ARE SOME DRILLING PROGRAMS WHICH OBVIOUSLY WILL BRING FORTH INFORMATION UPON WHICH MINERAL EXPLORATION, IN THE FUTURE, CAN BE BASED. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE OFFICIAL SITUATION OF THE MANY NATIONS ARE, I WAS TOLD THAT THERE IS A DRILLING PROGRAM BY A CONSORTIUM WHICH IS TAKING PLACE IN OFF-SHORE WATERS, TO THE VALUE OF SOME DOLS 100 M, WHICH SOUND A VERY BIG PROGRAM. BUT THAT IS IN THE WATERS JUST OUTSIDE THE TERRITORY." I MADE THAT STATEMENT WHEN I RETURNED FROM THE ANTARCTIC. THERE IS NO PARTICULAR SECRET, I WOULD THINK, ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF MINERAL RESOURCES GENERALLY OR THE RESOURCES

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OF THE TERRITORY GENERALLY. ANTARCTICA HAS VERY LARGE RESOURCES AND THEY HAVE BEEN MENTIONED ON MANY OCCASIONS. INDEED, I BELIEVE THAT AN ABC PROGRAM BROADCAST IN LAST COUPLE OF DAYS CARRIED A REPORT FROM AMERICA TO THIS EFFECT. HOWEVER, THAT IS THE COMMENT I MADE, AND IF THE HONOURABLE SENATOR STUDIES MY WORDS HE WILL KNOW THAT THEY ARE CORRECT."

"SENATOR DOUGLAS MCCLELLAND -- BY WAY OF SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION, I ASK THE MINISTER WHETHER HE IS PREPARED TO STATE THE SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION? SECONDLY, WILL HE STATE THE NAMES OF THE PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS WHICH MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM?" "SENATOR WEBSTER -- THE ANSWER TO THE TWO QUESTIONS IS NO."

2. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE PRESS UNDOUBTEDLY READ MORE INTO SENATOR WEBSTER'S STATEMENT THAN HE INTENDED, HIS DICIPLINATION TO CITE THE SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION

AND THE NAMES OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS SUPPOSEDLY INVOLVED, IS TAKEN BY PARLIAMENT WATCHERS AS A CLEAR INDICATION THAT HE HAD RATHER BADLY MISUNDERSTOOD WHAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD DURING HIS TRIP TO ANTARCTICA. HARGROVE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, PETROLEUM, EXPLORATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CANBER01131
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770057-1152
Format: TEL
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770228/aaaaayxh.tel
Line Count: 121
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 12a87cc4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 CANBERRA 777, 77 WELLINGTON 381, 77 CANBERRA 683
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3285032
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANTARCTICA: SENATOR WEBSTER'S ACCOUNT OF ANTARCTIC OIL EXPLORATION
TAGS: TGEN, XV, AS, (WEBSTER), (MCCLELLAND, DOUGLAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/12a87cc4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009